



What Families Can Do to Help Youth with Disabilities Prepare for Employment

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What Can Parents Do?

1. Hold High Expectations
2. Understand aspects of “career development”
3. Help youth explore and practice
4. Know the impact of postsecondary education
5. Know who helps
6. Other considerations

Page 2

High Expectations

Parents need to hold and convey high expectations that their youth can be and will be employed to the greatest extent they are able.



Page 3

4 Keys

- Persistence-** Things won't always go smoothly.
- Practice** – Youth need work experiences.
- Patience** – Remember, people grow up at different rates.
- Accountability** – Your youth needs to be accountable for behavior and for trying their best.

Why Is Work Important?

- Feeling of worth in contributing to society
- “Meaningful days”
- Learn social skills and responsibility
- Combats isolation and depression
- It’s what adults do
- Others?



Page 5

New Vision of Career Development

- “Career Development” includes 3 phases:
1. Self-exploration
 2. Career Exploration
 3. Career Planning and Management



Page 6

Self-exploration

“Who Am I?”

- Allows youth to explore own interests, skills, and values
- Can be formal or informal
- Helps youth shape an understanding of who they are and what they are passionate about
- Gives relevance to school

Page 7

Common Self-Exploration Activities

- Career Interest Inventories
- Personal Interest Inventories
- Understanding your learning style
- Finding your strengths
- Family activities such as travel or community events

Page 8

Self-Awareness

- Many youth don’t know what their disability is, or haven’t practiced telling others about it.
- It is crucial that youth know how their disability affects them in school and employment (to the greatest extent possible).

Page 9

Career Exploration

“Based on who I am, what are my best options to explore?”

Career exploration should help youth:

1. Identify how their interests, values, and skills relate to careers of interest
2. Describe the skills and activities associated with those careers
3. Identify the postsecondary training needed to successfully pursue those careers

Page 10

Common Career Exploration Activities

- Informational interviews
- Workplace visits and tours
- Job shadowing
- Career fairs
- Career camps
- Hands-on career projects

<http://www.nsttac.org/ytw/home>

Page 11

Career Planning and Management

“What do I need to do now to make my goal a reality?”

1. Acquire job search skills
2. A continual building of career readiness skills
3. Develop traits, work habits and behaviors that allow them to continually seek new work opportunities

Page 12

5 Key Aspects of CPM

- 1. Job Search Skills
- 2. Youth Leadership and Development
- 3. Career and Work Readiness Skills (soft skills)
- 4. Work-based Learning
- 5. Financial Literacy

Page 13

The Employer Perspective

Employers are looking for:

- A good attitude about working
- Honesty
- Punctuality
- Good communication skills
- Reliability
- Appropriate behavior
- Willingness to learn new things

Page 14

Work Skills

Your youth can become better prepared for work by building strengths in these core work skills:

- Solving problems and making decisions
- Using technology
- Reading and doing math at a basic level
- Understanding the employer’s goals
- www.iseek.org

Page 15

15

“Soft Skills”

Employers also seek employees who have strong interpersonal communication and responsibility skills. Does your youth:

- Maintain personal appearance?
- Communicate so others can understand?
- Show personal responsibility, including showing up for work on time?
- Take work direction?
- Have enthusiasm and a good attitude?

Page 16

16

Let’s Practice



- Building responsibility
- Maintain appearance
- Working well with others
- Keeping a positive attitude
- Taking work direction
- Showing initiative

Page 17

The Resume and Volunteering

- Every job seeker needs a resume.
- Beware of gaps...red flag for employers
- Be creative with what’s listed. Paid employment is not the only example of work experience and skills
- Volunteering is an excellent way to build work skills and fill a resume

Page 18



Let's Practice

It is crucial that you communicate your value to an employer.

I am _____, and that allows me to _____.

Example:
I am precise, and that allows me to finish tasks accurately.

Page 19





The Increasing Importance of Postsecondary Education

- Any education after high school
- Access to new jobs is dependent on it
- Set it as an expectation early
- Set it as a goal early (IEP)
- Do your research

Page 20





Who Helps?

- School
- County Disability Programs
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Community Rehabilitation Providers
- Disability Specific Organizations
- Workforce Centers
- Families

Page 21



Closing Thoughts

- Practice Applications/Kiosks
- Transportation
- Health Management
- Self Employment
- Talk to other parents
- **First job should not be the last job.**
Never stop expecting great things!!

Page 22

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Page 23